

## BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Richard H. Y. Chun

The sixth of thirteen children, Richard Chun was born on September 15, 1926, in Honolulu, O'ahu. His father, Charles Dai Nam Chun, had operated several restaurants and managed a fruit and vegetable market at Schofield Barracks, but passed away in 1939 while Chun was still in school. This left his mother and older siblings to support and care for the family.

Chun grew up in Wahiawā and attended Wahiawā School and Leilehua School. He was working as a part-time golf caddy when Pearl Harbor was bombed. From the golf course, Richard first saw the planes attack Wheeler Field, and he later returned home to find his family's house also damaged by strafing.

During the war, Chun worked with his classmates in the pineapple fields. He later left high school in 1943, attended the Pearl Harbor Apprentice School, and worked in Shop 17, the sheet metal shop, where he was able to see some of the war-damaged ships coming in for repairs.

After the war, Chun served for a brief period in the army. He then attended the National Trade School in Kansas City, receiving a plumbing license. Once back in Hawai'i, he returned to Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard and Shop 17, where he eventually became a foreman. Chun also taught classes for sheet metal apprentices at Honolulu Community College from 1963 to 1974.

Chun remained at Shop 17 until his retirement in 1982. He currently lives with his family in Pearl City.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Richard H. Y. Chun (RC)

April 8, 1993, and April 21, 1993

Mānoa, O'ahu

BY: Jonylle Sato (JS)

[Editor's Note: The following interview transcript is based on two interviews conducted on April 8, 1993, and April 21, 1993. At the request of the interviewee, portions of the second interview have been edited into the first.]

JS: This is an interview with Mr. Richard Chun at the University of Hawai'i, Mānoa campus on O'ahu. [The interviews took place on April 8, 1993, and April 21, 1993], and the interviewer is Jonylle Sato.

Okay, Mr. Chun, let's start with telling us when and where you were born.

RC: I was born in Honolulu on September 15, 1926, the sixth child of my family. I should say (one) of thirteen.

JS: So how many boys and how many girls were there?

RC: There were eight boys and five girls.

JS: Okay, can you tell me a little bit about your grandparents? Where they're from?

RC: My grandparents were from China. My father's father came from (Cha In Village, Chungshan). He went to Hong Kong and brought my dad [Charles Dai Nam Chun] over with him. Since my dad couldn't take that weather (in Hong Kong, he and his dad) moved to Hawai'i. (My father was eleven years old and worked on a farm.)

On my mother's side, both my grandfather and grandmother came from (Choy Hang Village, Chungshan). They had a farm in Pearl City. They were planting bananas and (various types) of vegetables. My mother [Lin Ing Luke] went to the fifth grade (at the Pearl City School). She told me if she graduated (from the) sixth grade, (then) she could teach school. My mother was born in (Honolulu on February 23), 1898, and was raised in Pearl City.

I should give more background on my dad. My father had six months of school (in China). [In Hawai'i, he] was a steward for the (44th Infantry) post exchange during World War I. He was also steward for the officers' club in Schofield [Barracks], and he knew the generals (and other officers). (He operated the officers' mess and) the 21st Infantry Restaurant, (a restaurant in Fort Kam[ehameha]), and later he had the civilian [restaurant, the Charles Nam Cafe] (in

Hale'iwa), and that was running simultaneously. (The restaurants were later lost because the employees were stealing money and food.)

In 1924, the family (moved to 1444 Dole Street, where my sister Grace was born). (In 1926, the family) moved to 2125 Bingham Street, and that's where I was born. In 1927, the family moved to (249) Kilani Avenue, and lived there till (November) 1936. We [then] moved to 1129 Auwai Drive in Wahiawā. In 1928 or 1929, my father got the concession (from the officers and general) to open a fruit and vegetable (market in Schofield, and [plant] vegetable fields in back of Wheeler Field [now Wheeler Air Force Base]). My father had asked Chun Hoon to finance that, and he [RC's father] became the manager for the store. That's how it came about.

My grandparents had gone back to China to live out their living days. The last one was my grandma, my mother's mother, (she went) back to China in (1933). My father was the only son living at the time. He had one brother that died when he was twenty-one years old, and his mother lived in China a year longer than my dad. She died in 1940. (He [RC's father] worked for Chun Hoon at the fruit and vegetable market in Schofield, up to the time of his death on September 10, 1939.)

JS: So how did he know Chun Hoon?

RC: Well, I guess they were (very, very distant cousins). They say all families with the same surname are cousins, one way or another, (if they came from the same area).

JS: Why did your father have this idea to start a fruit and vegetable (market)?

RC: Well, because (there was a demand) for it, and all he needed was financial backing for it. And Chun Hoon already had a (market) down at Nu'uanu Avenue (and School Street). (The) store in Schofield was not only retail, there was also wholesale where they furnish all this fruit and vegetable for the different military outfits in Schofield and Wheeler Field.

JS: Do you know if your father was dealing directly with military people or was there some other middle man that he dealt with?

RC: (Potato, onions, tomatoes, and other vegetables and) most of the fruits come from the Mainland, so Chun Hoon would import it in and send it over to Schofield. They also had a garden right back of Wheeler Field where they planted vegetables, (bananas, papayas, and figs). I remember when I was a kid, my father used to take me there [to] see those guys harvesting the vegetables, washing it up, and preparing to send it to the (market).

JS: So did your brothers and sisters help with that garden?

RC: No, they had regular workers there.

JS: And so your dad managed that store until . . .

RC: Until he died (on September 10), 1939. When my father died, (a) general from Schofield, (Charles H. Bonesteel II, sent a band to our home), and they played (a) concert in (my father's memory).

JS: Okay, [later on I'd like to get back to how your family managed after your dad passed away, but first] why don't we talk a little bit about the community you were living in when you were younger. You know, what area did you grow up in?

RC: Well, I grew up on Kilani Avenue [in Wahiawā] from (the summer of 1927 to November) 1936. And this was below Kam Highway [Kamehameha Highway]. In fact, Kam Highway wasn't even built then. It was started in early 1932 and was dedicated in 1933. All the construction was going on for that highway. [RC is referring to new construction and improvements done on the Wahiawā section of Kamehameha Highway, which was completed between 1933 and 1934.] When it was completed, President Franklin Roosevelt passed through that, you know, well, circle the island and pass through Wahiawā [in July 1934]. And the bridge that you see at Kīpapa Gulch, that's the [Franklin D.] Roosevelt Bridge, [it] was named after him.

JS: And what kind of community [was Wahiawā]?

RC: Well, the community, back in the old days, in that particular area things were really (hard). Those were depression days, so all the children would run around barefoot except for the well-to-do. There were a lot of pass-on from my older brothers passing on to me, and me to my other brothers, etc. It was a hard life. In fact a lot of times, during our birthdays in the hard times, I get a nickel and that's enough to buy me ice cream and cake—the sandwich ice cream. And we always look for a free one in there. We go down [to the] store, we buy one and we hunt for the free one. We know just about where to find it.

JS: What do you mean by "hunt for the free one"?

RC: (Packed in a box of twelve sandwich ice cream, we knew) there's a certain place on the box (where you can find the free coupon in the sandwich ice cream). The bread (delivered) to the home was about nickel a loaf. That Love's Blue Ribbon bread (sold) with a little stick candy in it. The milk was (also) delivered to the house. And we didn't even have a refrigerator. It was all icebox at that time. (In November 1936) we moved up into the (house) at Auwai Drive. In order that my mother could get my father to build, get him interested in building a home of our own instead of renting, she gave up all her possessions, like her jewelry and (savings). She gave it all up. She sold it. And what money she saved, she sacrificed to put a down payment. Well, she bought the (property) for the house, which was two lots, and she paid \$250 each. And then my father had to pay for the house.

JS: And that was when he still owned the restaurants?

RC: No, this was when he was working for Chun Hoon. This was 1936. Now when I said the restaurant, that was way back before I was even born, (during World War I and up to 1926).

JS: And he used to run these restaurants by himself?

RC: Well, no, he had other people working for him.

JS: What about the other people in the Wahiawā community? What ethnical makeup were they?

RC: The ethnical background. Oh, they were---a good majority were Japanese. There were (also



Portuguese), Korean, Chinese, and Filipinos. During grade school, most (people were going to) elementary school(s at) plantation towns. When you get to intermediate and high school, then you have all types [of] (racial extractions). Leilehua [School], the high (and intermediate) school, [had] a lot of Whites, (too), because [of] the military families at Schofield and Wheeler Field.

JS: So where you were living in Wahiawā, it was near Schofield and Wheeler?

RC: Well, actually Wahiawā is only about two, three miles away from Schofield.

JS: And which elementary---you know, you spoke about elementary school, which school did you attend?

RC: I went to Wahiawā [School]. (It is) no longer (in) that particular area. During World War II it was converted to (a hospital, and after the war it was named) the Wahiawā General Hospital.

JS: And at school, you mentioned that [most of the children] went more towards the plantation town, so they weren't with you?

RC: Most of the plantations (had) their own (area elementary school). Like people from Poamoho Camp, (Brodie 2, Waipi'o), and from Helemano, (they go to) Helemano School—elementary school. At Kunia they had this Kunia [School]—elementary school—and so on. I don't know exactly all the schools that were out there.

JS: So at Wahiawā, was it a mixed group then?

RC: (Yes), it was a mixed group.

JS: And how did everyone get along?

RC: Oh, we just get along fine. Of course, you know, like [anywhere] else had fights, but they [were] not rowdy like what they are today. No such thing as dope and all that, you know.

JS: And after Wahiawā you went to?

RC: Leilehua. Leilehua is intermediate and a high school.

JS: And tell me a little about your experiences in high school, what kind of school it was.

RC: Well, for one thing it was kind of far away. You had to walk two miles to school every day. Rain or shine. And while walking up there, where Wheeler Field used to be. . . . Along Wilikina Drive used to be all bushes there, and on the right-hand side as you go up Wilikina Drive, there's some establishment there. (There was) a clothing store, (a) photography shop, a service (station)—well, an automobile dealer and garage. And some other small businesses, restaurants and stuff like that. And the rest of the way, all you do is walk up there and you see nothing but bushes and eucalyptus trees until you get to the high school. (The military [has been] using those buildings, [which they had commandeered], since World War II.)

JS: While you were in school, did you do extracurricular things? Sports maybe?

RC: No, not too much. We're not establishing the period, because during part of my life going to school, the war broke out. So that was another situation. That's why it was pretty hard. As far as playing sports here, I played sports, but we had more community league. People playing against each other. You know, everybody establish a team and (the) local merchants sponsor(ed them).

What we did for recreation—you know, do you believe that we had milk covers back then? We played milk covers. But of course, the game right now, they call pogs. But it's a different way we play it, you know. We used to have the milk covers, put on a cement slab, and then we use a *kini* and then try to hit it out of that block. And we played the same way with soda caps. And we played marbles and we used to have this other game, *peewee*. That's a game (the younger generation knows nothing) about. Later on I'm (going to) make that thing and I'm (going to) make money.

Then we had baseball, softball, football, basketball, golf, handball, volleyball, all that we used to play before. But you know, it's different time of your life that you play, but as a youngster we used to play milk covers, soda caps, *peewee*, and marbles. And then baseball and softball is maybe fifth or sixth grade. Football was the same thing. Then basketball around the seventh grade. Tennis I played (from) seventh grade. Golf in the eighth grade. And then handball and volleyball about the same time. So I mean there's always---the things that we played with, you just have to (participate in the sports with your friends).

JS: And what kind of aspirations did you have in high school?

RC: Well, I didn't think too much about education in the beginning, I try to get by. But it seems to me that every time I go into a class, something my brother did, the teacher say, "Is that guy your brother?"

"(Yes)." That's it, you know.

But then when the war (broke) out, then I said, "Hey, I better make something out of my life." I buckled down and worked toward engineering. [I] was taking all the tough math (and science) courses. "Well, I might as well make something out of myself." So I used to really buckle down and (got) pretty good grades.

JS: So you wanted to be an engineer?

RC: (Yes), I wanted to be an engineer because I felt that I liked that type of work. And I was pretty good at mechanical drawing. I had a lot of years in mechanical drawing, (math, and science courses).

JS: And you mentioned that Leilehua had a lot of children from the military?

RC: Yes, there were a lot of military families there. And believe it or not, you hardly see any Blacks around there. In fact, I don't think Leilehua had (any)—well, maybe they had Blacks, but (I hadn't seen them).

JS: And these were families from the Mainland, or local families?

RC: They (were) from the Mainland.

JS: So how did the local children interact with them?

RC: (We got along) pretty well with them.

JS: And you mentioned that during school you also had a part-time job, caddying?

RC: (Yes), since my father had died in 1939, I started to caddy [at Schofield's Kalākaua Golf Course] in the summer of 1940 and. . . . It's a way that I could make a few bucks to help relieve the family. I made enough money to buy my books, clothing, shoes, [and school] lunch. So that was really helping out the family.

JS: Now, once your father had passed away, you and your brothers and sisters were still in school at that time, so how did you folks make ends meet?

RC: Well, my oldest brother [Henry] was a sophomore in the University of Hawai'i [UH]. He went to work for the Pineapple Research Institute, and he (conducted) experiments at the experiment station in Wahiawā (and at the UH). My second brother [Arthur] was the only one working when my dad died. And he was making thirty dollars a month. He was working for Chun Hoon [at the Schofield store]. My oldest sister [Louise] went to work at the laundry at Schofield. And my brother Alfred was caddying over there [at Kalākaua Golf Course]. And my oldest brother encouraged him to finish high school before [going] out [to] find a job. We struggled, but we (survived).

My father died in 1939, and social security benefits didn't come about until 1940. Had he died in January 1940, we would have help from the social security. There was no retirement plan. My father's insurance was for \$2,000, and that was enough to pay for the house and the appliances. The welfare people wanted to split the family, put three [children] here, four there, (and my mother would keep some). But my mother said, if she has to put up with that, she says, "I'll struggle and bring my family up myself." So she did.

JS: What kinds of things did she do at home?

RC: Well, my mother has to coordinate all the. . . . Well, first of all, let me tell you, there's thirteen of us plus my mother, that's fourteen. And we live in a three-bedroom house. We had one bathroom and we had another toilet and a shower and a laundry room back of the garage. So my mother would see that everybody (did) their chores. The ones that go to work, [she made sure] what time they get up, when they use the bathroom—like *Cheaper By The Dozen*. And at the beginning, (it was rough) because not too many [of the children] were working, and we were going to school.

It was a hard (time), but my uncles helped. They (pitched in financially to) help us get started. My brothers and sister went to work, so whatever income came in, then my mother had to budget the family (finances), what goes to groceries and (other) necessities. Everybody has their chores. (I did the grocery shopping and also was responsible for cleaning the yard.) Just about everyone did their own laundry except the younger ones.

JS: Did she [RC's mother] do any type of gardening to help with the . . .

RC: No, she had her hands full. When my father died, my youngest sister [Virginia] wasn't even born. My youngest sister was born fifteen days after (the) death of my father. So you can just imagine she had her hands full.

JS: And you mentioned that some of your older brothers and sisters also went to work once your father passed away. I know you mentioned your oldest brother went to work at the Pineapple Research Institute. Did he quit school to start work?

RC: (Yes.) He, (Henry), had to drop out, (but he continued) his studies later.

JS: And how did he get the position at the (Pineapple) Research Institute? Do you know that?

RC: I don't really know. I gotta ask him.

JS: I was just wondering if you knew maybe why he decided to go there.

RC: Well, because he was taking chemistry at that time, and the Pineapple Research Institute was under the University of Hawai'i, (and there was an opening at the institute).

JS: So do you know very much about what kind of things he had been doing there? Or did he just keep that to himself?

RC: Well, he's been doing that experimenting with pineapples to make it sweeter—(plant physiology). I remember he used to go to that Wahiawā experiment station, which (was) at the end of Kilani Avenue, and he (would experiment using various types of fertilizers. He spent 10 percent of his time in the field and 90 percent in the lab at the UH).

JS: Okay, and then your second brother, you said, was working at the store that your dad had managed?

RC: (Yes), right. He, (Arthur), was making thirty dollars a month—not eight hours a day either, about ten hours a day. And when my dad died, they raise(d) his pay up ten dollars. (He left that job) when defense jobs start(ed opening up) in 1940. He got out and look(ed) for something else.

JS: While he was at the (market)---how did he get the job there?

RC: Well, (after all), my father was the manager.

(Laughter)

JS: But why did he decide to go work at the (market)?

RC: (Well, jobs were few, and many [people] were in the bread line.) He only went up to the ninth grade. I guess he felt that it's a way to help out the family that he went to work. But back in the old days, (many students did not) graduate (from high) school. (Diplomas were given after you completed the ninth grade.)

JS: So do you know what types of jobs he had been doing [at the market]?

- RC: Well, trimming vegetables, (removing) old leaves, throw out the rotten tomatoes and rotten fruits, (loading and unloading the trucks).
- JS: And then you said that after a while he went into [jobs in] the [civilian] defense side?
- RC: (Yes.) I really don't know where he started from, but he ended up in Pearl Harbor [Naval Shipyard].
- JS: And that was before the war [World War II] had started though?
- RC: (Yes), that was before the war, (about 1940).
- JS: And so he didn't really. . . . Do you know how much he had seen the business change in your father's business?
- RC: Well, after my father passed away they had another guy over there (in) the wholesale department. The processing of the bills and everything was slower because this guy (was inept and) had to use the adding machine, you know, so that was the difference. When the war (broke) out, the store was done away with because the military would get their own supplies.
- JS: I see, so once---how soon after the war broke out, do you know, that the (market) closed?
- RC: I don't know. 'Cause Dairymen's [Association, Ltd.] was right next door. You know Dairymen's ice (cream and milk), they were right next door (in the) same building.
- JS: And did that business, they still stayed in operation?
- RC: (Yes, they were a local dairy outlet.)
- JS: Okay. And also you mentioned that your older sister, (Louise), was working or started to work at the laundry at Schofield.
- RC: Yes.
- JS: And do you know how she got that job or why she decided to work there?
- RC: Well, you know, you take any job that you can get. (Mrs. Caminos, a former neighbor, was a forelady at the laundry and got her the job.)
- JS: About how old was your sister at that time? Do you know?
- RC: Oh, I think my sister was around (twenty-one years old).
- JS: So she had finished school then?
- RC: No, she really didn't finish school at that time because (she was) helping my mother with the children.
- JS: So with the laundry job then, what kinds of things did she do there?



RC: Wash and press, (sort, etc.).

JS: Do you know some of . . .

RC: And that was (a) military laundry.

JS: So do you know some of the kinds of people that she worked with?

RC: Well, the people that work in there, I guess all types of people work there. But during the war between, I think it was either 1943, '44, they brought (Italian) prisoners (of war). (The prisoners were sent there to work alongside with them. I asked my sister, "How you guys communicate with each other?"

She said, "Well, you know, like broken English and (hand signs and manage to get the message across)." (When we went to a) foreign country, try to find out things, try to ask questions, the answers we get from the foreign people is about the same thing.

The prisoners built a nice chapel right back of that laundry. And that was about 1944. It's no longer there. (The chapel was destroyed to make room for the freeway.)

JS: So the Italian prisoners were sent to do some of the jobs along . . .

RC: Well, they were prisoners (of war) so they (were sent somewhere away from the war zone). They happened to pick Hawai'i for (the) place, and they kept the Italian prisoners (here till the end of the war in Europe).

JS: These weren't Italians from Hawai'i, they were war prisoners?

RC: (Yes), prisoners (of war) from Italy (chuckles). You know, the Americans conquered (Italy).

JS: And so how did your sister feel about working with them?

RC: Well, she didn't have any trouble with that. She didn't have any trouble with them. And those (prisoners) were pretty nice, they not rowdy or anything like that. (That's) what my sister had told me.

JS: Do you know if her job was affected in any other way because of the war? In terms of the amount, maybe the amount of the business they had?

RC: Well after all, (the) troop buildup was tremendous during the war. The amount of laundry (increased). Before the war they work(ed) one shift, but during the war they work(ed) right around the clock. That was the difference.

JS: And the pay increased also?

RC: I really don't know what their [pay] scales were or anything like that, (but there was a job and wage freeze during the war). (However, they had overtime.)

JS: Okay, and your other brother, you said, had been caddying [at the Schofield golf course],

right?

RC: (Yes.) Well, he, (Alfred), was a senior [in high school] that year. My oldest brothers told him not to quit school, to graduate before he goes out and looks for a job. And the first job that he had, I think it was Pacific Fertilizer [The Pacific Guano & Fertilizer Company]. He was working with a chemist there. Then later on he---when he had a chance to go to Pearl Harbor [Naval Shipyard], then he went to Pearl Harbor and he learned how to be an electrician. (He worked for the navy) at Ford Island.

JS: Uh huh. When he was a chemist---well, he was working with a chemist, right?

RC: (Yes, Dr. John H. Payne.)

JS: So how did he get that type of job? What was he doing with the chemist?

RC: (A brother-in-law of my uncle's was working there and recommended him for the job.)

JS: Do you know what kinds of things your brother was doing there?

RC: (He was doing chemical analysis with fertilizer.)

JS: Okay. And you said he then went to Pearl Harbor. Was that before or after the war started?

RC: That was before the war started, (late 1940).

JS: And how did he get in? Decide to do that?

RC: (He took a civil service) entrance examination, pass(ed) the exam, and he got in.

JS: And he passed the exam for being an electrician? Or did that come about later?

RC: (He was a) general helper first and then (an) electrician helper, and then work his way up (to journeyman electrician).

JS: And so when the war had started he was already working at Ford Island, right?

RC: Yes.

JS: Did he tell you anything about how things had changed in his job? You know, comparing before and after the war had started?

RC: We really haven't talked too much about that. I had my own problems, he had his.

JS: [All right then, before we go further into the war years, let's go back and talk some more about what you were doing.] Did you do any other jobs other than the caddying, you know, while you were in school?

RC: Yes. When the war (broke) out we worked in the pineapple fields. Well, this is not going to be in order of events, but . . .

JS: Why don't we start with your caddying job then, 'cause that was your first job right?

RC: (Yes), well that, you know, sometimes we sleep overnight in order to get a job caddying. At the beginning (we got) paid fifty cents a round. That's eighteen holes. After three weeks to a month, they give you seventy cents a round. And tips were very few. But when you caddy for (the) pros, they (gave) a dollar (for the eighteen holes).

JS: So who were the usual people that you caddied for?

RC: Mostly military. And then sometimes you get civilians. I like(d) to caddy for the civilians. There (was a) group of businessmen from Wahiawā. The only reason I like(d) to caddy for them is because they (were) always cracking jokes. (On) every fairway, they stop(ped) and then they (told) a joke. But the most interesting is caddying for the pros. I caddied steady for one of the pros. I don't think any of you remember him. He was Kammy Lau. He comes down every week and he plays with the (club) pro (Edward) "Spud" Murphy, navy pro Frank Morrey, and two servicemen, Lennon and (Horton). But anyway, they were all scratch players. And there were big bets. Kammy Lau was a (local) public links champ over here, but when he went to the Mainland, they won't allow him to play [because of his darkly tanned skin]. That was in the 1920s in---they (disqualified) him because he was too black. They say he was a Black rather than a Chinese, you know.

Then when the war (broke) out. . . .

JS: Or do you have any other things to say about before that?

RC: No, not really unless I think of something.

JS: Okay, well we can talk about December 7, and where you were.

RC: On December 7, 1941, I was waiting for this person to pick me up to help him deliver [newspapers] at Wheeler Field. And I waited an hour before he picked me up. I (said), "Hey, what happened?"

He said, "Press break down last night so there's no papers. So we don't have to deliver papers."

Usually we deliver papers at Wheeler Field, and we go through the housing area and then we go down the hangar line last. And that is between 7:45 [A.M.] and 8:05 [A.M.]. But if (those) papers were there that morning, I'm sure I won't be giving you this interview. Anyway, that person told me, "Well, what do you want to do, catch the bus to the Schofield golf course, or you want me to take you?"

I said, "Well, you might as well take me up the golf course."

He took me to the golf course. I got up to the golf course before 7:00 [A.M.] and people were teeing off already. When the time for the attack [came], we were watching those planes coming over Kolekole Pass. And I mentioned to some of the servicemen (that) were working at the (golf) club, I said, "Hey, they making these maneuvers real now. They even painting Japanese insignia on that planes." The planes were flying where you can actually see the

pilot. (The planes) headed toward Wheeler. But there was a lot of noise because a lot of planes (were) flying overhead. And we watched them going toward Wheeler. And all of a sudden we saw this shadow coming down and, "Boom. Boom." We (could) see the hangars flying up in the air, and (then) fire. We knew (it) was war.

All of a sudden, (a fellow from) the clubhouse ran out and said, "Take cover, we under attack!" and (then) radio silence.

So as the attack continued, they were strafing around Schofield and through Wheeler Field. I saw one plane strafing the people (on the first fairway). In fact, my cousin was (in that group). Nobody knew what was happening, and luckily nobody (was injured). George Kinney, a real joker, he (worked) for Standard Oil [Company of California], and he said, "Come on you guys, (stop making all the noise). How you expect anybody to play golf?"

We sent somebody (to inform them of the war), "Hey, you guys gotta get off the course." Also, there were two lieutenant commanders that commanded ships. They were playing the back nine and they were (notified) to report back to their ships.

JS: Do you remember who they were?

RC: No, I can't remember their names. After the attack subsided, I think after 11:00 [A.M.], they let us (leave) Schofield. The pro, Spud Murphy, took me home. But he stopped by a service station (in Wahiawā, which was located) where Kentucky Fried Chicken is today on California Avenue. We stopped (for gas). But the word (had) already gotten out, "Don't pump anymore gas."

So he said, "Well, you gotta walk home."

I said, "Okay." Well, that was only another good half-mile walk home.

When I (was) walking up the street, they [RC's family] were happy to see me. They were clapping. They (said), "Oh, that I [RC] was safe." They thought I was killed at Wheeler. They were really happy to see me.

When I asked my brother what had happened (at home), he said, "Oh, a bullet went through my [other] brother's [Alfred's] car." [It] struck his car, went right through the roof and right (through the floor)board and dug a hole in the garage (floor). And the car had already left 'cause he was working at Ford Island and he was asked to go back to work. So he went down, he drove down and he was going around seventy-five miles an hour, a policeman stopped him and ask(ed) him, "Where the heck you think you going?"

And my brother said, "Oh, they asking all the Pearl Harbor [Naval Shipyard] workers to go back into Pearl Harbor."

(The police let him proceed, but told him to drive safely.) He went down (to Pearl Harbor) not knowing what would happen. My other brother did the same thing. He went with his group. The guys (in their) carpool (drove to Pearl Harbor). Of course cars (in) those days were a luxury so not everybody (had) a car. My two brothers didn't come home for (a couple of) days. I think was around two days (before they came) home. So I asked my (electrician)

brother where (he slept) the first night.

He said, "Oh, (under a) machine gun nest."

And I ask the other one, "What happened to you?"

He said, "Oh, we went down to Kalihi and we slept on somebody's front porch."

Living in Wahiawā, there's no way (he was able to come home). Blackout and whatnot. (The) people came out and ask him, "Eh, what you guys doing over here?"

And my brother (said), "We cannot get back to the country, so the only thing we could do is get into town. But we don't have any place to stay."

So he said, "Well, okay." (My brother and his friends) slept on the guy's front porch.

JS: So it wasn't someone he knew then?

RC: No. He didn't know these people. But you know, people were usually (understanding to) local guys. They not gonna make any waves.

JS: And that brother was doing what kind of work at Pearl Harbor?

RC: At that time he was a (carpenter helper), then he became a carpenter.

JS: [What else happened at home?]

RC: There was damage to the house. One [bullet] hit the roof, one hit the sidewalk, one hit my brother's car. And the rest of the yard was just full of machine gun bullet holes from the planes. My brother was telling me that when the attack was on, they had a dogfight above. And then later on these planes came down and they were strafing (the) wireless station in Wahiawā. And adjacent to that area is the Mutual Telephone Company. And anyway, that wireless station was one that communicate with ships at sea. Our home was in line with that wireless station. And my brother had asked my three youngest sisters to come back (into) the house. After (they) got back to the house, here comes the machine gun bullets all through the yard. So luckily he had called them back, or (my three sisters) might have been injured or killed.

Well, the first thing when I got home, my mother said, "Oh, you better go down the store and get some flashlight batteries, get some food." I walked down [to] the store, I had to cross [George] Fred Wright Playground, and they were organizing the [Hawai'i] Territorial Guard. And the Hawai'i National Guard sent. . . . People from the National Guard (were) sent to guard the wireless station and the Mutual Telephone Company.

When (I) got home (I heard) on the radio, "Blackout." So that night everything has to be blacked out. (The) National Guard were staying in (the) house back of (ours), they [were] guarding the (wireless station and Mutual Telephone). And they didn't have any (food for supper and were) disorganized. They were talking with us, so my mother whipped up something for them so they have something to eat. Nothing fancy, but you know, something



for them to keep their stomach filled.

Then that night was blackout. Then this neighbor of mine, across the street, he was in charge to be a block warden. But he was so afraid to go out. So they asked me to accompany him, so I did. (We would) go over to the houses (with lights on) and tell them to put out their lights. Imagine what blackout is. Try turn off all your lights, just stay in the (dark) house (with) nothing else to do. The only thing we do is listen to the radio. And the news was sparse and the Boy Scouts of America (were) spreading all kinds of rumors. And nobody knew what was going on. They say, "Oh, Washington D.C. was bombed. San Francisco was bombed." And all that. Nothing really reliable, so you just pass it off. Then later on as the news trickled in, then (we) knew what was going on.

JS: Can you tell me a little bit more about the blackout and [going] out with the block warden?

RC: Well, it was kind of scary because everything was (black)ed out). When we (saw) people with lights (on, it was usually the) radio light bulbs, and from the road you can see the light. What we (had) to do is go over there and knock on the door and say, "Hey, your light's showing." So the thing (to do is) either (cover the radio) or remove the bulb. Well, the first night was important because nobody (knew) what was going on and there was so much rumors flying around. Really wasn't too safe to walk around. Somebody might take a potshot at (us). Once we get in the house (about) eight [P.M.], don't go out (chuckles). Curfew, you know. [Initially, curfew and blackout lasted from 6:00 P.M. to 6:00 A.M. In following months however, these restrictions were gradually relaxed, and both curfew and blackout hours varied.]

JS: So was it just you and the block warden going around?

RC: Well, we only cover our block. That's about it. And some other people have theirs. And then, I think was around eight o'clock that you gotta cease all that.

JS: So do you recall any kind of incidents that happened because of the blackout restrictions?

RC: No, not really. People seemed to be obeying the law. We were under military government, what you call, martial law.

JS: So when you went around with the block warden, you know those . . .

RC: Well, it's only a short while that we did that. Because you gotta get back in the house by eight [P.M.], your curfew time.

JS: Did you just go with him the first night or all the other nights, too?

RC: No, I went with him the first two nights. After that, everybody knew what to do so we just disband the whole thing.

JS: Do you remember what kind of feelings the people around the neighborhood had about this?

RC: Well, everybody know it's an inconvenience, but they really nice about it.

JS: What about their feelings towards the start of the war?

RC: Well, I think everybody was scared, for one thing. You don't know what was happening, (and) you don't get too much news. And if anybody spread a rumor, that thing just travels and maybe it's not really true.

The next morning, [December 8], I walked through the Wahiawā town because I had to go down to the store and get some more food. All the people with shortwave radio (had to take it to the police station) so they could (remove) that shortwave part of your radio. There was a long line going to the bank, (mostly) older people. I don't want to mention, but if you really want to know, most of the majority of the people there were Japanese. They were trying to draw their money out because they didn't know what was going (to happen). I guess they felt that if they had the money at home it would be safer.

JS: So how did the community react towards the local Japanese?

RC: Well, there's really, you can't do anything. These guys (were neighbors, friends, and) classmates. (Most were second-generation Japanese), and we've been friends for a long time and you can't take that away. In fact, some of my classmates volunteered for the 442nd [Regimental Combat Team] and lot of them were killed. But they are really sincere American citizens. Japan (wasn't) their country, but (the) United States was their country.

The schools were out for several months, Leilehua being the worst because Leilehua High School was taken over by the army. And the Wahiawā School was (converted) into a hospital. Oh at that particular time, there were no big hospitals here. One doctor had several rooms (in his office building).

Everything was hard to get. Gasoline, liquor, beer, chicken feed (were rationed). (Rice was hard to get, but they were sending some from California.) (Although we did not) starve, it (was) a little inconvenient to get what you want. We were asked (not to hoard food).

Before we get to that, gas masks (were issued to) all the civilians. (The babies and small children) had the special gas mask. We were (also) asked to build air raid shelters at home. My two younger brothers, (Alexander and Edward), and I, we were building (our) air raid shelter. My mother said, "If you dig this air raid shelter for [me, I will] give (each of) [you] a twenty-five dollar bond." (My brother George wanted a piece of the action but was too small to work in the trench, so my mom gave him a penny a bucket of dirt that he moved from the top edge of the trench.)

We spent about a week digging up this air raid shelter which was about seven feet deep, four feet wide, and (twenty-five) feet long. Then my oldest brother, who was working for (the) Pineapple Research Institute, brought home eucalyptus tree branches (and mulch paper). (We laid the branches across the top of the trench and covered the branches with a canvas, and the mulch paper over the canvas, then covered it with dirt and planted sweet potato.) Of course you know that thing being damp and whatnot, there's lot of mosquitoes so you got to get rid of the mosquitoes. We lined the air raid shelter with heavy cloth, 'cause lumber wasn't easy to get. (The air raid shelter had steps on each end.)

JS: Did you ever use the air raid shelter?

- RC: (Yes), we used it once. When (the) battle at Midway [June 4–6, 1942], the alarm sounded to take cover. We saw B-17 bombers going to the northwest, so we (were saying), “Oh, something’s coming up.” (We stayed in the air raid shelter until we heard the all clear signal. The Japanese fleet was headed toward Midway or Hawai‘i.) Midway is only about 1,300 miles away from Hawai‘i. But the big Battle of Midway took place, and the Japanese were stopped there. When the battle was [at Midway], they called off the alarms. So we got out of [the air raid shelter].
- JS: And your whole family fit into the (air raid shelter)?
- RC: (There was enough room for all of us, but when the alarm sounded, only ten of us were home.)
- JS: Was [building a shelter] mandatory?
- RC: No, it wasn’t mandatory, but they asked (us) to. For your own protection, build your own air raid shelter.
- JS: Okay, [let’s talk more] about the rationing system, then. How did that work in the following days after the war?
- RC: Well, they were telling people not to hoard. The things that they were rationing were the pretty hard-to-get items. (Gasoline), liquor, beer, rice, (butter, poultry feed, etc.).
- JS: How were those things allotted per family? Like how much did---did they say how much each family could have?
- RC: I forgot already. I remember the chicken feed, they allow me so (many bags based on) how many chicken I had, and I could (purchase poultry feed) twice a month. But the rest I forgot. Oh, gas rationing, that was one. I don’t really remember that, but I remember my brother gets allotment because he uses the gas to go to work. And I’m not familiar with the gasoline rationing at that time. I think (each car was qualified for) ten gallons a month just for leisure. I didn’t have a car and I never paid too much attention (to) it, and I was too young to drink beer.
- JS: But you had said earlier, one of your chores was to do the shopping, right? So did you have to still do this with the rationing coupons?
- RC: I forgot already. I remember for the chicken feed (because I kept the ration card). My brother had an allotment for beer. But he never did drink, but he just picked it up anyway (and gave his friends).
- JS: But things worked out for your family even with the rationing system?
- RC: Oh (yes). Well, the thing is they tell people not to hoard. And if you hoard, then (there will be a shortage) of supplies. (Most) people were pretty cooperative about it. Let’s put it this way, nobody starved. When the war (broke) out, [there was] all this barbed wire fences along the beaches, and so we couldn’t go swimming out there because they had all that barbed wire around.

JS: What about other effects on your family? How did the war change your lifestyle?

RC: Well, every morning my brothers (were) eating in the dark. (A few days later we covered the windows with felt paper so light cannot be seen from the outside.) We (built) a little box on the outside (of the window) so that the air can come in. I don't know how my brother drove to work. There's only a small little part of his headlamp where the light comes through and they painted that thing blue, or they put some kind of film on (the headlamp). You can hardly see. My mother would get up early in the morning (to) make breakfast for them, and then they (went) to work. We went out and try to do chores around the (home).

I was [also] telling you about this school being taken over, Leilehua intermediate and high school was taken over by the military. The Wahiawā elementary school, the only (elementary) in Wahiawā, (was) converted to a hospital. (Leilehua) class of '42, I don't know what happened to that class, but anyway I think most of them went to work [during the war]. And they didn't have a graduation ceremony until last year. They graduated with the class of '92. Fifty years later.

(Many portable classrooms were built in Wahiawā [during the war], and [were] located parallel to California Avenue. Today the civic center is in that location.) Satellite city hall in Wahiawā (was one of the teachers' cottages. We also) used (the) Japanese-language schools [for classrooms]. One was Hongwanji [Mission School], and another one was the Shōwa [Japanese-language] School, and another one was down at Kam Highway, the [Wahiawā] Dokuritsu [Japanese-language] School.

During the war, the classrooms were scattered. (Dokuritsu) was [part of] the high school, that was the main office and whatnot over there. And I think Zippy's [Restaurants] (is located) there now. (The Hongwanji was also used for elementary classrooms.) When you go from one class to another, you gotta really (walk fast). (You have only ten minutes between classes.) For assemblies, we used the Wahiawā Theatre. And that theater is no longer there. Right now (the) Bank of America is (located) there. That was the only place large enough to hold an assembly. And they were nice enough to let us use it.

JS: And this was for the high school students or the elementary school?

RC: For (schools) that want to (use it). But usually the high school and intermediate school (uses it).

JS: And you said they also took over some of the Japanese[-language] schools, right? I know they had to shut those down, but do you know what happened . . .

RC: Oh, those classes were completely knocked out and they won't allow it anymore.

JS: Do you know what happened to those teachers?

RC: I don't know. There was one guy that his father was the priest for the Hongwanji [Mission]. I hadn't seen (this) guy from high school days, until the last reunion we had (in) 1989. So I really didn't ask him what happened to his (father). Maybe if I see him one of these days, I'll ask him.

JS: And so the buildings that the military took over and even Wahiawā [School] that was turned into the hospital, did the schools ever get their buildings back?

RC: No. Later on Wahiawā Elementary [School] was built (years) after the war. It was built where it is today up on Glen Avenue. Now there's many elementary schools. Of course, population has grown, (too).

JS: And then what about the high school? Did they get their buildings?

RC: (No. A new high school was built in 1949.)

JS: So they built new buildings?

RC: Right.

JS: And you had said that the schools were shut down for a little while [at the start of the war], and opened up again.

RC: (Yes.)

JS: And how did they get the word out that school was going to be resuming? Can you remember that?

RC: (Radio and) newspapers. Our school was shut down longer than any others because [portable] classrooms (had to be built). Whereas the other schools, a lot of them were not affected. But we were, because we (were located) close to [a] military base and the school was taken over by the military or (by) the hospital.

School started around March [1942]. Anyway, school was held only for four days a week. One day a week (we worked in) the pineapple fields. They call (it) the High School Victory Corps. On Mondays, (Leilehua) and Roosevelt High School (worked in the pineapple fields). Every day different schools go out and work in the pineapple field. But anyway, I (also worked) on Saturday to make some extra money. (It was) really hard work, (and we were paid) twenty cents (an hour at) the beginning. (Later), they paid us twenty-five cents [an hour]. That's not very much.

JS: And I know the pineapple industry was one of the important industries during the war. Is that one of the reasons why you chose to work there? Or were there other reasons?

RC: We were forced to work.

(Laughter)

RC: In order to save the pineapple industry, (all students worked) in the pineapple field. I mean (every student) capable of going out to work in the pineapple field. Of course, you have deferments, too. Like my friend, John Lee, he [later became] an intermediate school teacher. But anyway, his family had a laundry [that catered to] the military, so he [worked in the laundry]. There's some other girls that had medical problems. And they work at the hospital. And the rest, they go out in the pineapple field. Well, some people they have farms which



was important. And others in the cane community, you know, they work in the cane field. But the rest of the school, everybody goes to the pineapple field. And you get graded, too, because there's teachers (in the fields). Once a week you go out in the pineapple fields and work. The only time that you don't work in the pineapple field is when there's a storm. You listen to the radio every morning (for the announcement), "There will be no work in the pineapple fields today," then you go to school.

JS: So what exactly did you do?

RC: We (did) anything they ask us to do. Some days (we) *hō hana*, you know that's (weeding). Other days you go over there, you pick slips, put it in the bag. (We picked) pineapple, take it [to the] end of the row and they chop the top off and the bottom. People from the plantation usually watch over us, [and] teachers from the high school would (also supervise each group).

JS: So were the schoolchildren working along with the regular plantation workers?

RC: Well, there's only one [plantation] person there (to tell us) what to do. (The) field boss rides around on a horse to see if everything's working right. (We rode trucks) out early in the morning when [it was] still pitch-black yet. 'Cause they actually had daylight savings time over here, so the (days were) longer.

JS: So with, you know, the children working one day out of the five days, how did the schoolwork, how was that affected?

RC: Well, I got my share of my education there. I didn't think I really missed out too much. 'Cause then you gotta work a little harder (to cover all the necessary information on the subject).

JS: But so, in terms of what they were teaching in school, though, did they try to speed things up or do less? Or do you know. . . .

RC: (Yes), we covered quite a bit, because the teachers would just accelerate the thing. Some things that's not that important, then instead of going into depth, they just skim through it. Say for instance, you got algebra and you going through equations, you not gonna have a whole bunch of equation (problems)—working that for days. But as long as you know the idea how to work things. Or some other courses you get—you accelerate a little faster. The pace is set faster so I don't think we really missed out that much.

JS: So how else did the war affect school in terms of academics?

RC: Well, lot of guys, they quit school because they went to work. I mean some people just don't like school (chuckles). That wasn't a priority back in those days. I haven't seen (some of my friends) since the war (broke) out. When the war (broke) out, (a classmate) went to work for (defense). He went to (school on) the Mainland. Last year, that's 1992, I saw him playing golf at Ted Makalena Golf Course. And I haven't seen him all (these) years, but I remember him because he and I were pretty good friends.

JS: And your sister and brothers were still in school, too, your younger. . . .

RC: (Yes), the young ones continue to go to school. My youngest sister [Virginia] was born in 1939, so when the war (broke) out, she was only two years old. But she didn't miss anything, she just went on to school. I guess all the rest of 'em did too. (During) the summer months, we work(ed for the) government doing odds and ends labor jobs, cleaning (yards), or washing airplane engine parts. We work for the (army) air force, washing airplane engine parts. The mechanics put (the engine) together.

JS: And this is summer jobs for children? I mean the schoolchildren?

RC: (Yes), high school (students).

JS: Well, what other effects on the Wahiawā community, as a whole, did the war have?

RC: Well, for one thing, there were more servicemen around the place. At times there (were) problems because some of them (got) drunk and rowdy, (causing trouble). Like any other place, there (were fights, but with the local police patrolling with the military police, [they could] quickly stop the fights).

(Many new businesses sprouted up. Two roller-skating rinks were built near Mango Street in Wahiawā. It was popular because many servicemen used it. One ice-skating rink was operating in Wahiawā, next to the ice plant on California Avenue.) The ice-skating rink was real popular. Then there were other kinds of problems—girls that would run around with the servicemen, get (in) trouble. (Before something could be done, they ship the serviceman overseas.)

JS: What about other businesses, how were they affected by the increase of servicemen?

RC: (Many new bars and restaurants [were] open for business and were making a fortune.) The military have their own beer garden (on the army camp), but still yet they come into town just to get more action, or (looking for women). One thing that you don't see today is the military police, but back in the old days, the military police patrol Wahiawā (and other towns). They kind of keep things in order.

At Wahiawā Heights, there used to be an ammunition storage area for bombs (and ammunition) for the planes at Wheeler. One day my cousin and I were watching (*The Mark of Zorro*) at the Wahiawā Theatre. [In the movie], the guy [was] coming out with the sword and waiting for the other guy around the corner and then, "Boom." (A 500-pound bomb exploded at the ammunition storage area, and all the theater doors flew open. The women yelled.) The first time was all right and everybody settle down and they were watching (the movie) again. But when the second (explosion) went off, some of the women started to panic, they (ran) out of the theater, (afraid) something (would) happen to them. But after a while everything simmer(ed) down.

(The army removed the chain link fences at Wheeler Field), and they used to park the planes across the street, (near the) Leilehua Golf Course (and National Guard armory). They (park) the planes there to protect them from [enemy] attack. On December 7, [1941], or before that, all the planes were lined up just about wingtip to wingtip. And when the Japanese [planes] (attacked Wheeler), they had a field day because [the American planes] (were) all in line and they (destroyed) all the planes [on the ground]. In fact, not one plane got (off the ground)

from Wheeler. [Other sources claim that a few planes did manage to take off from Wheeler Field later.] Wheeler Field had all P-40 (fighter planes)—they were modern planes. The only planes (that flew) up were from (the) Kawaihoa airstrip right along the beach. These P-36s went up and fought the Japanese (in the sky). [Another source mentions that a few P-40s also got off the ground at Hale'iwa Field.] Dogfights, you know, with the planes. I going out of order but . . .

JS: No, that's okay.

RC: My brother, the third one below me—George (now) lives in (Elizabethtown), Kentucky—(told) me, he was sitting on the back porch and watching the dive-bombers dive-bombing, and he called my oldest sister to come and watch the planes dive-bombing Wheeler Field. (Well, incidentally, George is very interested in the December 7 attack. He's writing his experience, and he bought many books on the attack. Every time I visit him, he asks me questions about the attack.)

JS: Did they know it was enemy planes?

RC: Oh, (yes).

JS: And they weren't frightened of it?

RC: (Yes.) Oh, another incident that happened that December 7 was [that] this neighbor of ours, Major Flaig, he was a doctor at the Schofield hospital. My (oldest) brother ran over (to his home) and said, "Hey, (Doc, we're under attack by the Japanese, and all military personnel must report back to their station)."

The (doctor) said, "There's no such thing as war."

So finally, he was convinced that the war was going on. So he went (to Schofield and) never came back home for two weeks. And all that time he's at the hospital. And the wife was living with him and they have no children. So for several nights she was really afraid. (My sister Louise would spend a few hours each night with her until she was able to adjust to the situation.)

I told you that my mother had thirteen children and we lived in a three-bedroom house. And we had two toilets, one bathtub, and (a separate) shower. And so [during the war], my mother would coordinate who goes in the bathroom depending on what time they go to work, what time they go to school. And the younger ones would eat early, so when the older ones get home from work, the younger ones are already done. And my mother would fix breakfast and lunch. She made lunch for us to take to work and for the schoolkids to take to school. And she did a very good job (laughs). Amazing. And during World War II, I used to raise as many as 200 chickens. And I bought the chicks from the hatchery at Damon Tract. That's where the [Honolulu International] Airport is [now]. And we would use the fryers for dinner. And the eggs that we collected, we use that, and the old hen we sell to the store.

Oh, during World War II they had (other) airstrips. One (was) back of Wheeler Air Force Base. They made one longer airstrip so they could fly bombers out of there. And there was also one in Mililani. The Mililani area, in the cane fields.

JS: So did those airstrips affect your community at all?

RC: No, not really. That's just protection I guess. Placed in case they get---if one airstrip get bombed they have other airstrips around the place.

JS: Were people in the community---do you know who was sent to build those airstrips?

RC: Pardon?

JS: Do you know who had been sent to build the airstrips? Was it just the defense workers? Or people . . .

RC: They have construction companies that built that, I really don't know who built that. All I know they existed there.

Another thing too, (after the start of the war), I think it was in [April] 1942, when General [then Lieutenant Colonel James] Doolittle bombed Japan, it was a strong morale builder. In [July] 1944, President Roosevelt came to Hawai'i to meet with his commanders. Riding an open convertible, he passed about four feet away from me. And I was standing in front of the Pearl Harbor administration building, and he seemed to be old, drawn, and you can see the strain of the pressure of war. But we waved at him, and he would wave and smile back at us. Then the following year in 1945, I think it was April '45, that President Roosevelt had passed away.

JS: You were talking about the [Doolittle raid] bombing of Japan in 1942.

RC: (Yes.)

JS: And how that had been a strong morale builder for the people. How aware of---how much of an impact did these kind of news of the war have on your family or the people you knew? How did you folks react to . . .

RC: Well, we felt that we take it over to them. I felt real good about it. I said, "Hey, they [the Japanese] brought the war over here. Now we (brought) the war over there [to Japan]. So let them think a little about what could happen to them." You would feel the same way because they [the Japanese] thought they were out of reach. 'Cause you remember Japan had possession of all this smaller islands in the Pacific. And yet they would feel that they were pretty safe, but when the planes took off from a carrier and they dropped the bombs (on) Tokyo, and then [after that] they landed in China. I think that was a big accomplishment.

JS: So by this time, was the mood of the Hawai'i community where you were, you know, your family, and with your brothers working at Pearl Harbor and everything, was it less fearful of the war? Or did you folks still feel like there was a threat to the islands?

RC: No, after the Battle of Midway, the Japanese capabilities were less so you know, the restrictions were less. [U.S. victory in the battle at Midway, June 4-6, 1942, dealt a decisive blow to the Japanese who lost several carriers and skilled pilots in a fight they had felt confident of winning. This battle marked a turning point in the Pacific war arena by removing any real threat of a Japanese invasion of Hawai'i.] I forget when they start taking barbed wire



off the beaches and when the blackout ended. 'Cause the threat of the war coming to Hawai'i was so slim after the Battle of Midway.

JS: About the Wahiawā community, I was wondering, was there any kind of change in atmosphere here [during the war], especially between the military and the local Japanese? Or even Chinese who might have been mistaken for Japanese?

RC: I never paid too much attention to it. For one thing, you know, the military (identified) people working in Schofield or [other] military areas (by their badges). A person of Japanese ancestry [had a] (picture ID) identifying them with a black background. Whereas the rest, like me, you know other Orientals—other than Japanese—and the other nationalities, they have [a different badge, that's] the distinction. That way you could tell. But, I mean, just walking around the community. . . . But most of the people that lived there, you know, we knew each other so it really wasn't [any] problem. I mean, I didn't think that these guys were disloyal to the United States. Maybe the older generation would, but guys that I went to school with, they all pretty good American citizens.

JS: And then during the war, those war years, you graduated, right, from high school?

RC: Well, actually, I left in my senior year. But then, they [later] gave me my diploma because, for one thing, I was still enrolled in that apprentice school [at Pearl Harbor] and I had enough credit to graduate, 'cause I was taking five solids a year.

JS: So you graduated in 1943, then?

RC: I graduated with (the) class of '44.

JS: And you said you were in apprentice school? So this was the Pearl Harbor one?

RC: (Yes), Pearl Harbor Apprentice School.

JS: And how did you get into that school?

RC: (I took a civil service apprentice entrance examination and passed. The higher your numerical grade, the sooner they called you for an interview, and you select the trade you want [to work in], if that trade has openings.)

JS: And what made you decide to go into that school?

RC: Well, I could contribute to the war effort for one thing, and I (thought) it was a pretty good opportunity at the time (to learn) a trade (and earn money). Someday I can go to school again. But as time went on, (I found) this trade pretty interesting 'cause there's lot of challenges. With all the background I had in mechanical drawing and in mathematics, (I) just breezed right through the (apprentice school courses). The other thing is to get the necessary skills (from the shop). As for the drawings, (we made sketches, drew blueprints, and developed patterns for sheet metal articles such as ventilation fittings). Well, I figure a lot of things mathematically, all through my years (I used) trig[onometry] and (algebra). But there's lot of ways to (figure out the problem).



JS: So you said you left high school your senior year and that was in 19-?

RC: Forty-three.

JS: Forty-three. And you went to the apprentice school. And were they teaching you anything specific or was it still just general math type of classes?

RC: Well at the beginning, they were teaching trade theory, mechanical drawing, and mathematics. Then later on they branch into English and physics.

JS: So it was still sort of like a regular school then?

RC: (Yes.) Now they have regular scholastic (courses) like (in the) junior colleges.

JS: So did you go to the apprentice school with an idea of getting a certain kind of job?

RC: (Yes. I signed up for sheet metal.)

JS: And that's what you wanted to do?

RC: No, that wasn't what I wanted to do. No, first I wanted to be a pattern maker.

JS: Pattern maker?

RC: (They make models for casting parts. Then it is sent to the foundry and a mould is made.) They pour metal in (the mould, and after the casting [is complete], the object or part) is machined down to get the final product.

JS: And why did you want to do that?

RC: (A) good friend of mine, (and a member of) the same boxing club, was doing that. And I said, "(That's a) kind of interesting job."

(The apprentice school principle said all the positions were already filled.) They (were) not taking anymore. So (my second choice was) to be an electrician, because my brother was an electrician. Bernard Ney, the principal for the apprentice school, said, "You know, nine out of ten people want to be electricians. No, the (trade) is filled, (too)."

My brother (Alfred) had told me ahead of time (that) sheet metal is a good trade. He (gave) me briefly what (they made in the trade, and) that sounds kind of interesting. (Then I told Mr. Ney), "I want to be a sheet metal worker."

(Mr. Ney said), "Oh, we got enough (men) coming in from the (helper program), and we already picked up some apprentices. Any other trade you want?" He was trying to get me to (be a) boilermaker, shipfitter, (blacksmith, or machinist).

I said, "No, if that's the case I rather go back to school and go on to college."

(Mr. Ney) said, "Well, I'll put you there [in sheet metal] temporarily."

So the first (time) I went to the shop, (it) was so noisy because they were cutting metal—(punch presses were punching, riveting, forming, etc.). And the acoustics were really bad over there. And my ears would ring, and I'm telling you it rang for several weeks until (my ears) adjusted to the sound. (Because) there were no earplugs, I put cotton in my ears. When I [got] home at night, my mother (spoke) to me, (it sounded) like she's about a mile away. Because of that I lost my hearing. I lost so many percent of my hearing (and couldn't) hear my watch (ticking).

JS: And how was this job compared to some of the other outside jobs since this was in the defense . . .

RC: I think that was pretty well-organized. They had a real good system over there. And of course, our school time was cut down. But then, the work time was longer. Not only that but they accelerated the classes. Instead of four-year apprenticeship, they cut it down to three years 'cause they need the skill[ed] people (on the job), and the guys go through the apprenticeship, don't spend as much time in one area as you normally would. But then you learn the skills of that trade. And it's really up to the individual. If you really wanted to make something out of yourself, you can, and you can show what you can do. But like everything else, I found out that, as my brother told me, "Don't be smarter than the mechanic, 'cause if you do, they not (going to) teach you anything."

So, I always had that in mind and I always work along with them. And then, you know, if you aggressive, you want to do work and the guys they see that you want to do, they'll help you. Especially the younger ones. But the older people had resentment on younger kids coming up so fast that they make journeyman in (a short) time, and where they [the veteran workers] took years for them to (become journeymen). So that was one of those things why they had their resentment. And then I noticed that, too, and I didn't know what to do. I just went along and worked and before you know it they assigned me to a different mechanic.

So when I was a foreman [in 1972], I made sure that all these apprentices that come in, they (got) a variety of training working with different mechanics. And I made sure that they had good teachers, guys that know how to teach the trade good. In fact, I even had the instructor under my section. And I even (took) time out sometime to give new employees classes, what background information they would need, some tricks in mathematics and (other pertinent info), and how to help the mechanics (in the shop). Of course, my superintendent was real understanding, and he always believed in training, and when we look back at the (number of) people that were (going to) retire. . . . Oh, I should tell you this later (chuckles). I guess I'm kind of jumping the gun. But anyway. . . .

JS: Okay, why don't we go---we can get to that when we get towards your later career. But going back a little bit to. . . . How long did you have to study, then, for the sheet metal shop?

RC: I completed that training in (less than) two-and-half years.

JS: So then for the rest of the war then, you were in apprentice school?

RC: (No, most of the time was spent in the shop. However, I was an apprentice throughout the war.) In 1944, I (received) a letter from the President of the United States saying that they want me in the service. I had to take (a) pre-induction physical examination, (and) passed.

(Then, I was notified to report to the draft board in Wahiawā, and [I] would be inducted into the service.)

JS: Well, before you get to . . .

RC: They drafted me into the naval reserves, and (I was placed on) inactive duty so I can continue working [at Pearl Harbor]. You know, because (of the) manpower [shortage], I (continued to work) [at the sheet metal shop] for the duration (of the war). When the war ended, (I was discharged from the naval reserves and later was inducted into the army).

JS: Can we talk a little bit more about before you got inducted? You were at Shop 17 [sheet metal shop], right?

RC: (Yes.)

JS: I know you were studying, but you also [had] jobs that you had to do?

RC: (Yes, you go to apprentice school for) eight hours, one day every two weeks. And the rest of the time (I worked) in the shop actually doing (sheet metal jobs). (I learned the trade) from the different (journeymen that I worked with). The first guy I worked with was (an older person). He resent(ed) the fact that lot of these young (workers were promoted to journeyman in a short time, when it took him four years or more) to get his journeyman status. He was (against) teaching people. (I told this fellow), "They assign me to (work with you)."

And he tells me, "Oh, do this," or "File this," or "Hacksaw this, cut that." Or, "Go down the shear and get the material for me."

I (was thinking), "This (job) is not for me."

But then, the (younger) guys were different. I don't know if they were lazy or what, but they (tried) [to do] the least they can do (and gave me) more work to do. But by doing that I learn(ed) more. And I wasn't afraid to work because (I was) there to learn (the trade). And I swore that when I become a (journeyman), I'll never treat (the helpers and apprentices) the way these (older) people (were) treating me. I had lot of initiative and I (tried) to do the best I can. In the first couple of months, I was just working on the bench, and (then I was assigned to assist the welders in the welding section). (The welders taught me gas and arc welding of sheet metal articles. We helped them turn over large items, chip off the slag, and wire brush the welded area.) Then later on, they let (me) weld some (sheet metal products).

Then (I was assigned) to machine operation, how to use the (hydraulic) shears, big punch presses, brakes (for forming sheet metal). (The machine operator would set up the top and bottom dies for the punch presses, which must be aligned perfectly or the dies may break and injure someone. Some of the punch presses are large, with fifty-ton capacity.) (The) forming machines and brakes are really big, (and the capacity) was only up to one-eighth of an inch (thick metal). During the peak of the war, Shop 17 had 2,500 (employees, so I didn't) know everybody. There are areas where I didn't (work, submarines, temporary ventilation, etc.). (Next), I went to general fabrication. Just building (articles) out of sheet metal. (We worked on) guards and ice cans and furniture work, lockers, and toolboxes, or whatever is required for the ships.

(Then I was assigned on board the ships), that's when I met Richard Tan [another Shop 17 worker pre-interviewed by JS]. And I helped him with ripping out, (removing, and installation of sheet metal furniture and other sheet metal articles on the ships). When I got through (with) that element, then I (was assigned to) ventilation fabrication, where I (worked with) Eddie Au [a Shop 17 coworker], (and I was his helper). (Then I was able to do jobs by myself. Ed Au is [now] the owner of Au's Plumbing & [Metal Work, Inc.].) (Then I was assigned) outside on the ship to install ventilation (ducts and sketch vent ducts, and then back to) the shop to learn pattern development, layout work. (I remained in the layout section until I was inducted into the army.)

JS: So you got to do what you wanted to do originally, then? A little bit?

RC: Well, I want to be the boss.

(Laughter)

RC: (Yes, layout and pattern development is the most difficult part of the trade.)

JS: So how did the---I know there were more people there, but how else did the war affect your shop?

RC: How did it affect the shop? There were so many people there and the shop (was) so small. All the benches were taken, (so we had to put our tools in toolboxes). (The shop worked on) three shifts. And sometimes (we worked overtime). When the fleet (was in port and were) preparing for another invasion, (many of) the ships (came into Pearl Harbor) after a battle, (for repairs and installation of new equipment, so) there's lots of work. Sometime I work twelve hours (a day). (Overtime for me depends on the driver of the car—whenever he worked overtime, so would I.)

JS: And you were still living in Wahiawā?

RC: (Yes), that's right.

JS: What about relations with the military? Since you folks were civilians? Was there much contact with them?

RC: (We worked on the ships, the officers and crew were all military. Sometimes a [drunken] sailor would try to give someone a bad time, but they were taken to the brig by the MPs [military police]. Usually they were pretty friendly.) I get along fine with them, 'cause I'm not a rowdy (person).

(One day the supervisor assigned us to install) some light locks (on a transport docked) by Ford Island. They were going into (the) battle zone, [and] these light locks are (designed so that personnel) in the pilot house (can enter or leave the area, and the light cannot be seen from the outside). (The officer) told us they were in a rush, they want us to do that right away—which we did. (During) the lunch hour, all these servicemen were in line for food. And (the officer stopped) the line and let us eat first, because they wanted the job done. (We heard a lot of remarks from the servicemen, but the officer shut them up.)

JS: Okay, and what about some of the things you did off-hours? Can you tell me a little bit about those things?

RC: Oh, well, I played (on our class) basketball team. But then lot of times these basketball games (are) interrupted by heavy work load, then you got to postpone the games. But we did play whenever (we were on) eight-hour shifts—then we can play basketball. We used to catch (the) train that runs from Pearl Harbor, in front the administration building. We (rode) it to the Iwilei terminal, that's on [North] King [Street] and Iwilei [Road]. I think cost us a dime to ride. But that's the way you get into town. And there were a lot of people that rode (the train). (The marines checked our) badges when the train is (traveling to and from) Pearl Harbor.

JS: Were there ever any . . .

RC: Mass transit.

JS: Were there ever any kinds of problems, you know, with . . .

RC: Well, I (did not) ride the train that often. The only time when I'd ride the train is when I go over to somebody's (home or) when we (played) basketball. And (usually) I sleep at somebody's home, I don't go home because I can't get back (to Wahiawā).

JS: So the games are played in town, then?

RC: (Yes, we played on the outdoor courts of Pālama Settlement.)

JS: So as you folks were coming into town, what kinds of things did you notice that were different because of the war?

RC: Ah, nobody pay any attention to that. Because the trains are so loaded, you could hardly look outside.

JS: So, actually then, you were just pretty much doing things like usual.

RC: I think was pretty normal already by that time.

JS: [Well, what else did you do off-hours?]

RC: When the fleet is out and you on eight hours, I used to go out with (my friends) like Richard Tan. He'd invite me (to stay at his home) because I don't have a way home. (His) wife used to call me, "son," because I spend so much time (at their home). (Employees rotated their day off so) not everybody would have Sunday off. (We were off) every eighth day, and they call(ed) that day J-Day. Every time you have a J-Day, (you are) helping out the Japanese by staying home from work. No offense. Anyway, on Tuesdays and Thursdays of the week (when we didn't) work overtime, we used to go down to Waikīkī and play volleyball, play touch football, and then (we went) swimming (next to the) [Waikīkī War Memorial] Natatorium. On our day off, a lot of times we (would) go to Kokokahi to catch crab or have (a) picnic. (The fellows brought their wives and children to these outings.)

JS: At those times, did you notice any effects of the war or was it just a normal day off?



RC: Well, by that particular time, the war was moving away from here. So (we) didn't have too much affect by it. We had a job to be done, to repair the ships and get (them ready for the next battle). (I haven't) worked too long on the ships, but I've seen days when these ships (sailing into Pearl Harbor) all battered and (had to) be repaired right away. And if you looked at the (ocean from) Kailua (and) Kāne'ohe, you see all the ships (assembling for the next convoy). My wife was living in (Waipouli on) Kaua'i at that time and she said she can see ships, as far as she can see. Just waiting for (the) convoy.

JS: To go to Pearl Harbor?

RC: No, to go to battle. (When ships go overseas), they go by convoy, (protected by fighting ships). Many military ships come into Pearl Harbor for repairs. The worst (damaged aircraft carrier to enter Pearl Harbor was the USS) *Franklin*. Gee, I forgot what battle it was in. And that (carrier) was just listing, (leaning one way, not level). And they (wouldn't) do any repairs over here, so they sent it back to New York. I've worked on (the) big battleship *New Jersey*, which was (assigned to the Pacific Fleet). When we fixed up the conference room in the superstructure, (we installed a) big conference table. (We saw Admiral [William] "Bull" Halsey taking command of the USS *New Jersey*, his flagship.) After the European war was over, the battleships *Iowa*, the *Wisconsin*, and the *Missouri* (joined the Pacific Fleet). And at one particular time the four (battleships) were docked side by side, across from the receiving station at Pearl Harbor. Those battleships are really big, ([over] 880 feet long and 100 feet wide at midship on the main deck). (From) the crow nest, I could see Hickam Field clear.

JS: How did you feel about working on those ships that you knew were in battle in the war?

RC: Nothing, like any other job. Of course, like I said, I didn't work outside that long. So most of my experience was working in the shop, (because of my background). They wanted to use my talent in other areas, (too, but the second boss in command wanted to use me for the layout and pattern development section).

JS: How did you and your fellow workers, what was your view of how the war was going, you know, by seeing these ships?

RC: Well, usually you get some news that come in ahead of time, the Battle of Midway, (Coral Sea, or) where they had the battle. When all the tugs go out (after) a big battle, bound to have damage on the ships. When they (tow in the disabled ships), then you know (the extent of the damage).

JS: But did seeing all of this make you folks think. . . . Did it affect the way you folks thought the war was going for the United States? You know, how we were doing?

RC: Oh, (yes), definitely. Once after the Battle of Midway, it was just a matter of time. Of course there'd be battles to be fought in. . . . I guess we had a lot of confidence in our armed forces.

JS: Okay, well . . .

RC: Oh, wait, I gotta tell you something else.

JS: Okay.

RC: Oh, when I first started there, I was (earning only) seventy-three cents an hour. The apprentices [who] were two classes (above me, said), "Eh, you guys (are) lucky (to start with) seventy-three cents." They started with forty cents an hour. Anyway, the head of the shop was a master (mechanic), today would be the superintendent of the shop. Anyway, the master of the shop was making three dollars an hour. He had at one (time), at peak of the war, (was responsible for 2,500 employees). Can you just imagine, three dollars an hour. You make more than (twice) that now, huh?

My mother encouraged me to save my money. "Some day you're gonna need it." So I let her take care that. Besides that, she takes her share of the money to run the family, and she put some away for me. And I get my spending money, too.

JS: So was your mother working at that time?

RC: My mother never did work. I mean she work all the time, taking care of thirteen children. That was (more than) enough for her.

JS: And so how were things at home, then, by this time?

RC: Well, things improved because we had a lot of money coming in, everybody, quite a few of us working. And that got us out of the hole. Of course, the house was already paid for. That was a big obstacle that we (overcame). The next thing was---the next priority was to get everybody educated.

JS: Okay, do you have some other things to talk about while you were, in that first time you were at Pearl Harbor at the Shop 17?

RC: When the war---in 1945 when the Germans were defeated, all (the) other (ships) from the Atlantic came over here. You could see more ships over here, big ships over here. And then they [the U.S.] drop the first atomic bomb that they drop [on Hiroshima, Japan, on August 6, 1945]. And the devastation from that bomb (made us) say, "Hey, we got a superweapon."

And then we (wondered) how the heck [the Japanese] (are going to continue the war) with that kind of destruction. Later, they [the U.S.] drop the second one and that hit Nagasaki [on August 9, 1945]. And that was when Japan (said), "Okay, we give up." [On August 14, 1945, the people of Hawai'i learned of Japan's defeat. Japan, across the international date line, listened to the broadcast of Emperor Hirohito's surrender announcement on August 15, 1945.]

So, once the news break out, they said, "Oh, Japanese surrender." So they said, "Okay." All your public, your PA [public announcement] system throughout the shipyard said that Japan had surrendered and, "You guys can all go home." And we didn't have to come work for two days. We walked (to) the parking lot and we just (looked as) we passed by this place where they had this overhead (walkway) connecting one building to another up in Pearl Harbor, where industrial relations is. And there were people up there and they were throwing toilet paper and everything over (the rail), everybody celebrating.

JS: Everyone was, I guess, relieved that it was over. How else did this---did the end of the war change things with your family, maybe your brothers' and sisters' jobs or things like that?

- RC: Not at (that) particular moment. But it did affect my (older) brother (Alfred) and I, because we were discharged from the naval reserves and then they inducted us into the military. Then my brother below me, (Alexander), was inducted (a) month later. So there were three of us in the military at the same time.
- JS: And what kinds of things did you do then in the military?
- RC: Well, I was the company mail clerk. And I do all the kind [of] clerical work and. . . .
- JS: So how did you feel about being in the military now that the war was over?
- RC: Well not really that bad. I would say it was good.
- JS: And you didn't . . .
- RC: Of course the pay was small you know.
- JS: But you weren't staying in Hawai'i though, while you were in the military?
- RC: No, after basic training they sent us into different companies, and then my brother went to Germany and I served in the Pacific and my younger brother, he served in Japan.
- JS: So your younger brother went to Japan?
- RC: Yeah, he was with the 24th Division. He was in Kyushu, in the medics. Then later on, well, right now, today, he's doing research in medicine so I guess the doctors, they gave him encouragement to get into the medical field. (My brother George also served in Yokohama, Japan, as an electronics technician. And Frederick was a Seabee who served in the U.S. and Cuba.)
- JS: So did he tell you anything about his time in Japan since it was right after the war? Did he say how the---what his impressions of the country was?
- RC: Never asked him.
- JS: Well, what about your time in the military? You were in the Pacific you said. So where did you go? What were some of the places you went to?
- RC: Oh, I went to Gilbert (Islands, which are) coral islands. To my estimation, it's hard on the eyes because you looking at coral all the time. It's white. Probably ruined my eyes. Then one incident we had over there was this two island guys, they were so dark---(we wore shorts, no shirts---we) get pretty dark. Anyway, these two guys, they were dancing with the natives, and the commanding officer was there and the commander of the island was there. And they were watching these people dance. And we were watching them, too. And these two guys went in there to dance with the natives. And (they) just follow the natives, but we were laughing because you could tell they were not natives because where they [usually] (wore their) combat boots, [only their ankles and feet are] white (laughs). I mean lighter color, you know. It was so funny.

The natives live a poor life there. They have electricity but they not supposed to use it because actually (it is for) military use (only). The shacks that we live in (were) made of two-by-four (frame), and the roof they (used) *lau hala* leaves instead of shingles. The natives would sleep on mats that they weave from *lau hala*. Lot of the shelter, on the side they have coconut leaves. Our restroom we (made were) outdoor toilet. You know the ones that you don't have to flush. But the natives, they have theirs that they build it out toward the ocean. You do your thing. [The toilet is] made of coconut stumps, you know, and they have coconut leaves around so people cannot see. And you don't have to flush either. So all the droppings would go down into the ocean and the fish would eat it. But when the tide comes in, (the natives would catch and eat the fish).

Oh I should tell you the reefs, they extend about 500 to a 1,000 feet out from the island, the higher part. And on low tide, you probably get about a foot of water. And then on high tide it might be around five feet deep. When the tide (comes) in you can (see) all the fish coming, all the silver fish coming. You can see them splashing all around. Fish like mullet, '*o'io*, (and) sand sharks. As far as you can see there's thousands and thousands of fish coming in. It's up to (you) to catch it. (Sometimes) we help the natives when we have time off. (The) local guys from Hawai'i go torching (at night). We go out with bayonets. We have a Coleman lamp, flashlight, and we take a spear. The spear we used to spear the octopus. And we use the bayonet and we see (fish). There's lot of *wekes* at night, and we just hit 'em with the bayonet, knock 'em out, pick it up, put it in the bag. Go back to the barracks, we (clean), cook, and eat it with rice.

Coconut is their main food there. And I'm telling you, coconut is used in many ways. As far as I can see, they use it for. . . . They cook the rice and they put coconut in (it). They (made) coconut oil (for cooking, suntan lotion, and they made) coconut shampoo (and soap). I guess they use coconuts for practically everything there. And they catch this stick fish or other kind of fish. And they just throw it in the fire and they just barbecue the fish and eat it.

Then I went to American Samoa. Now Samoa is a poor country [U.S. territory], too. American Samoa, the only thing that they have there, at that particular time, was the naval (station). Let me see. It's right in that Pago [Pago] Harbor. Or like you say here, they say, Pago Pago. P-A-G-O P-A-G-O. But you know, they pronounce it "Pango Pango." The naval station is right in the Pago [Pago] Harbor. And the civilians live right (next to the barracks). (Some) people live underneath the houses. They have coconut around the place, they have taro, bananas on the side of the mountain. Later on we had, I think was in the sixties, I think, they (built a tuna) cannery. But it's no longer in existence. Most of the people there were working for the military anyway. They had people working in the mess (hall). They had a hospital that was away from (the station). And the airport is around that area, too. The policeman there (wore) lavalava. And they like the Hawai'i boys, but they hate the sailors.

JS: Was there a specific reason why you folks were there?

RC: Yeah, well we pass through there, but we had some of those things that we had to pick up, surplus material that we had to pick up and get ready to ship back to the United States.

JS: So were you in these places for very long?

RC: No, not very long. Maybe a couple of months.



JS: Were there any other experiences or incidents while you were in the military that you especially remember?

RC: (While) we were in Suva, Fiji, we stayed at (the) New Zealand (outpost). The cows would (roam), I mean the cows are outside the buildings and what we really afraid of is you get into one of (the) cow droppings—they're about a foot in diameter and about three, four inches thick. You walk into one of those, boy, you have to really clean your shoes. And we went over to French New Caledonia. And that place was---the French seemed to hate the Americans over there, but that place was rich in nickel. And the sewage system over there, you know, they didn't have a sewage system. What they have is what they call a honey wagon. They pick up (these) cans that they (used for their toilet), and all that waste (is sealed up in) these cans, and every morning the truck come by and pick it up and (it's thrown) on the truck and they dispose of it. Probably it's not anymore in existence, but at that particular time it was that way.

(In) New Zealand, we went to both Auckland and Wellington. And when it's summer here, it's winter there. So it was pretty cold. Auckland was a seaport. Pretty interesting place. A place for R & R [rest and recreation]. And Wellington was even nicer, because the way it's situated. They (have) a bay there and a mountain around it. And you can see all the sheep on the mountain. My friends and I went to look for a Chinese restaurant over there. Somebody told us we can find one on Haining Street. We walk down there, we look all around, we couldn't find one. So finally one Chinese guy stepped out and ask us, "What you looking for?"

I said (in Chinese), "Oh, we looking for Chinese restaurant."

So the guy told us to follow him. So we went over there and we went through the back way. So we saw the owner and we spoke to him and he told me, "Oh, where you from?"

So I told 'em, and I had to talk in Chinese, which I can't do very well. He was surprised and he start talking to us (in English), and then we order our food and we ate there.

We say, "How come you folks board up the front entrance?"

He say, "Oh, when the British sailors come over, they wreck the place, take all the chopsticks. That's why [we] only serve the Chinese people." That's an interesting experience, I guess.

Oh, on the way we stop by at Nadi, Fiji. And we went to a place, a sugarcane town named, Lautoka. There we went into a Hindu temple. You cannot wear anything leather in there because the cow is sacred there. So we had to take our shoes off and leave our wallets out, take our money, put it in our pocket, and then leave our wallets out. And then we went into this temple and (saw) an idol with (oil) lamps on both ends that burns continuously. Pretty interesting. But at least I had experience to see (their) religion. Of course, I didn't have the chance to see Moslems there. There are a lot of Indians that live in Fiji. Then they have these (natives), Melanesians, you know those big fuzzy-wuzzys [refers to the curly or frizzy hair of the indigenous people, the term sometimes carries derogatory connotations]. Well, I'll show you some day.



JS: So sounds like you had a lot of different kinds of experiences when you were in the military.

RC: Well, even as a civilian, I always do make the most of it. I travel around to see what I can find.

JS: So when did you finally return to Hawai'i?

RC: I forgot when already.

JS: Was that in the end of your military career?

RC: (Yes), just about.

JS: Was it about 1947 or so?

RC: (Yes.)

JS: And you returned home to your home in Wahiawā?

RC: (Yes.)

JS: Did you see any kinds of noticeable changes from when you had left, about the types of people in the community and what they were doing?

RC: No, not really. We were---I think there were less military people there.

JS: So, you know, now that it was a couple of years after the war had ended, did you see any other, any remains that suggested the war had been here?

RC: Well, you know lot of the guys that came out of the service. They made use of their GI Bill [of Rights], so lot of them were going to school. Some people that I know, they had gone to the Mainland to go to school, see. We would get in contact with them. Of course, when I came back I work for the air force for about two years. The armed forces were so big, they (reduced the size of the military and civilian manpower). Anyway, in 1949, they moved the whole (fighter) wing out from Wheeler Air Force Base. They just about shut down everything there except for the housing. And the only people that they kept there were two electricians, two oil burners, two disabled vet who were carpenters, and (three) plumbers. Just people to maintain the housing and the buildings.

JS: So when you were working there, there were---it was as a civilian right?

RC: (Yes.)

JS: How did you decide to go there to work?

RC: Well, I had return rights to go back to Pearl Harbor. But then they wanted to put me on Ford Island. And I found out that the air force had an opening up at Wheeler Field, which was only about ten minutes away from my home. Well, I said, "With lesser pay, I (would save travel time, gas, and would have more time to myself)." So I took that job.

JS: And so what were you doing there? What kind of job?

RC: Sheet metal work. Air conditioning. Sheet metal. General work. I used to build dresser tops like in the kitchen sink and all that for this buildings. Repair. In fact, in the buildings that the gutters that were shot up during World War II, we went up there and repair it. Used to maintain all this temporary radar stations around the island. Not only this island, but. . . . I was responsible for the one at Kōke'e, Kaua'i. I went twice up Kaua'i. And done work up there. Up at Kōke'e. They have a crew that works in Barking Sands but (did) not do any repairs at Kōke'e. Then I had one station up at Kailua, Maui, a radar station. I maintained all the sheet metal work (required on the buildings). And on this island, O'ahu, I had Wheeler Air Force Base, Kahuku, Ka'ena Point, Mount Ka'ala, station out there at Waipi'o, Pu'umanawahua, that's up by Barber's Point, way up in the mountains. I (also) had Koko Crater and Bellows Field.

JS: So you know, going around to all these different places and working in sheet metal at Wheeler, after the war . . .

RC: We had (a truck assigned to our shop).

(Laughter)

JS: What kind of changes in the job or in things that you folks were doing, what kind of changes did you notice from the war days when you were working at Pearl Harbor?

RC: Well, the war days we working on ships, mostly repair(ing) ships. You (hardly see any) wood because wood can burn. (However, aircraft carriers have wooden decks, and subchasers and minesweepers were wooden ships.) Everything [else] is metal. So things that you use for the building, like (at Wheeler, we made) kitchen sinks, metal liners for your dresser tops, ventilation duct work, (etc.). Sometime we go into a tunnel, and then after the (completion of the woodwork, we cover the exposed wood) with sheet metal so the water won't drip down (on the equipment). Of course, those tunnels (have) radio, (radar) equipment, and (other) electronic gear (that must) be protected.

JS: And going around to the different places, did you also notice any kinds of lasting effects from the war? You know, any damages, or did things look pretty normal?

RC: (Yes), things looked pretty normal. The scars of the war were (mostly on) buildings around Wheeler where the first [Japanese] planes that came in through Kolekole Pass hit Wheeler first. And the rest of the planes continue on to hit Pearl Harbor and Hickam [Field]. But on this outlying bases, the small, little stations that I mention(ed), those were temporary buildings that were built during the war.

JS: And how long did you stay at this Wheeler job?

RC: Two years.

JS: Then what did you do?

RC: I got [a] temporary job for four months at Schofield when they had Operation

Mickey—training maneuvers that (were held) in 1949. We (fixed) up the buildings so that the (troops) from the Mainland (had) adequate accommodations. Mostly what we did was fix up (the mess—food service area). Then I was unemployed for a while. Two of my friends and I decided that we going to the Mainland and make use of our GI Bill of Rights. So we left in 1950. And you want me to continue?

JS: Yeah.

RC: Then we went to San Francisco first. We spent the day in San Francisco, then we went to L.A. [Los Angeles], (took the) night flight to L.A. where my brother met us and set us up with a hotel. We spent several days there visiting the sights of Los Angeles and also the University of Southern Cal[ifornia]. (We rode) the Greyhound bus through San Bernadino, all the way up to Flagstaff, Arizona. And the next day we took a tour (of) the Grand Canyon, then went back to Flagstaff, caught another bus that took us down to Roswell, New Mexico, and we ended up in Carlsbad, New Mexico. Then we visit(ed) the Carlsbad Caverns. From Carlsbad, we went to Amarillo, Texas, (for lunch). We (passed through) Tulsa and Oklahoma City (to) Wichita, Kansas. And we ended up in Kansas City, Missouri.

JS: And that's where you went to school?

RC: (Yes), that's where we went to school.

JS: And what school was that?

RC: National Trades School.

JS: And how did you choose that school?

RC: I looked in the *Popular Mechanics* and saw the ad. Of course I already know what plumbing was all about, and I just wanted to get some experiences (and theory). If there's no job, (I can always do plumbing repairs).

JS: So at school, what kind of things were you studying?

RC: Well, we learn (the) different types of pipes, (like cast iron, galvanized, lead, and clay pipes). (We had) projects over there where you put in the sewer system, then you hook up your toilets, your washbasin, (bathtubs, etc.). And (we did) lead-wiping. And that's not a practice anymore. (We had) mechanical drawing, (trade) theory, (and math). The master plumber for the school, [his] mother was a reverend of a church, and (the) building (was under construction). He gave us (practical) experience (installing) fixtures in (the church). Because I had sheet metal background, he asked me if I would put up his leader pipe for him. And this was when the Korean War (broke) out and he couldn't get anybody to do the work for him. In fact, the contractors on that project just quit. You know, they went to get government (contracts). I went up there, see what he needed, and I put in (the ducts so they) can run the heating system, and I (also installed the leader pipe from the roof to the sewer).

Funny thing though, that one morning when I was putting up the leader pipe(s), the temperature was dropping and you know, when there's a cold wave the temperature drops fast. And in a matter of four hours the (temperature) dropped about forty degrees. I (grabbed

the) leader pipe and my hand just froze onto that pipe, like when you take (a metal) ice tray out of the refrigerator. Well, that's what happened to me. So I put on gloves (while working, and still) my bones would really hurt. Every so often I had to run back in to warm up again. While the others were working on the toilet on the inside, they were pretty warm. But I was working on the outside by myself and it was mighty cold, (about twenty-four degrees).

When we first got into Kansas City on the Greyhound bus, all (we saw was) snow. We went to (the) school and they gave us (addresses of rooming houses). We went to this (house, but) they were all filled. I saw (a fellow who) used to work in our shop, and I (said), "Eh, what's the matter? You feeling cold or what?"

He said, "Oh, yeah, [I] cannot take the cold."

And the lady over there would say, "He's been like that ever since he came. He had to be by the fireplace. And he said that he was leaving for Los Angeles where it was warmer."

Finally, we went into this rooming house (on Cherry Street). We had one big room (for the three of us). We put our bags down and we [were] deciding what we gonna do. Go in town (and buy) what we (need). Here comes (a) Mexican (who opened) the door (and rushed in). He thought his friends were there. "No, your friends not here." So we bought some locks and lock up our room (chuckles). The next day, we went out for breakfast because the lady doesn't make breakfast on Sundays. So the three of us start walking to (a restaurant) where we can (buy our) breakfast. There (was) sleet on the sidewalk. My friend, he grab ahold of my hand as he slid, and I grab the other guy, (and the) three of us ended up on the driveway on our 'okole. Since we had so much winter clothing on, we didn't get hurt. But it was so funny, three of us went down at the same time.

JS: So it was a very different kind of atmosphere.

RC: (Yes), it was quite an experience.

JS: So, you were there for how many years?

RC: I stayed there one year.

JS: One year. And so you were just studying plumbing?

RC: (Yes. Well, it was a ten-month course.) I wanted (a part-time job), but I was offered a job as a sheet metal mechanic. But I have to (work) eight hours (a day). Six hours school in the morning, work eight hours, that's fourteen hours, and then it takes me travel to and from work, to and from school. When am I gonna sleep? So I decided against that.

I got a job as a parking attendant at City National Bank, (with the help of two) *Haole* boys (who teamed up with Dai Wun Lam and I on school projects and) got to know me pretty well. They finally convinced the assistant manager that I should be working for them.

One day I went [to the bank] to see (Bob Ray Morgan from Mount Vernon, Illinois). When the assistant manager saw me, he told me, "Oh, I'm thinking of you. (Don't) worry, I'll get you in." (Morgan told me to see the assistant manager, who introduced me to the manager.)

(I was hired as an auto attendant for) seventy-five cents an hour. I found out that the manager from Overland (Park), Kansas, he was stationed with the marines at Pūpūkea [in Hawai'i]. He (knew) I was far from home so he used to give me the extra (work, using the) power sweeper. I (also) used to direct traffic there. At the end of the month I go to the (bank) post office, help them with the (bank statements). The bank (had) its own cafeteria—you (can buy) a reasonable dinner or lunch (for) thirty-five cents. (We also received free soda, milk, fruit juices, or coffee.)

JS: So, when did you eventually decide to come back to Hawai'i?

RC: (After I left Shreveport, Louisiana.) (I caught) the overnight train (from Kansas City, Missouri to Shreveport), Louisiana to see my friend Johnny [Lee]. He and I play tennis (or visit Centenary College and museum and other points of interest in Shreveport). (During the winter, I rode the Kansas City Southern train to Shreveport. John Lee met me at the station.) (We rode the bus) to his sister's home in Bossier City. (I) spent Christmas and New Year's there. We went duck hunting, which was a (new) experience for (me). We (also) went hunting for rabbits. (His) neighbor used to be a trapper. He took us out (to) Lake Bayou. Since we bought only one duck license, only one of us could go (with the trapper). Of course the trapper, he had his own license. When (it was) my chance, I jump on the boat and I start rowing the boat (through the lake full of) water cypress (trees). (The trapper) told me, "Hold the boat steady."

I say, "Okay."

I start holding the boat steady, but as he shot, the boat ran into a tree and the guy almost fell in the water. It was so funny, I couldn't help but laugh. Kansas City, you know, back in the old days it was really segregated. The Kansas City Southern runs from Kansas City to New Orleans. When you traveling from the north going south, it's non-segregated. But as you go [from the south heading] north, they're segregated. In Louisiana (the) movie theaters was (segregated), Blacks on one side, Whites on the other. Even the Greyhound bus station, Black on one side, White on the other side. In fact, one experience I had when we were riding this bus from Shreveport down to Bossier City, the front (seats were all occupied), and I walk (toward the back of the bus). I told my friend (John), "Plenty seats in the back." Local [i.e., Hawai'i] people like to sit in the back of the bus. But then there's such a thing as a color line, a strip in the bus that segregates the Black from the White. And I told my friend, "Let's sit in the back."

He said, "No, you can't pass this color line."

I said, "Why not? All (the seats are) empty." And this was (after midnight).

He tells me, "The bus driver (may) kick (us) off the bus. Maybe tonight he won't because you with me, but I gotta ride this bus every day."

And so I said, "Okay," (and we) stood up all the way (to Bossier City).

(The) servicemen from Barksdale Air Force Base, they sat in the back and because so many of them come (on the bus at) one time, the bus driver won't do anything because if he does, [he] get beaten up. But for the civilian, (the) [bus drivers] can tell you (to move or) can throw



you off the bus. Especially my friend, he was by himself and he commutes from Bossier City down to Centenary College of Louisiana [in Shreveport]. He has to travel (six days a week).

One other interesting experience was that we met the friend of Johnny's sister. They call him Doc Winston. (He worked for a cotton compress company and was in charge of all the Blacks that worked there.) (Taking the cotton, compress the cotton), and they bale it and they ship it out. (Doc Winston and his wife) came to Hawai'i in 1925 on (their) honeymoon. They didn't have any children. We went to (visit his home). He's got a pineapple plant, gardenias, (and) hibiscus in pots. During the summer months when it's not too cold, he brings the plants out in the open. And during the winter they take (the plants) indoors. He (had) a bamboo grove (in his yard). (In their home, they had different Hawaiian pictures on the walls.) They have *lau hala* matting (on the table). You really get a Hawaiian atmosphere in there.

(He was) real kind, too. (Just like Hawai'i-style), if you don't drink with him he gets mad. The animals around that area were so tame that he just put out his hand with some feed and the birds would just land on his hand and eat the feed. Or the squirrel, put his hand down toward the ground, the squirrel would run down from the tree and come over and take the nuts off his hands. Later when Doc Winston wrote to me, he told me (about the new highway being built next to his property and) mess(ing) up his sanctuary that he had there for all the animals. (Doc) really liked his animals. And the animals liked him, too—they all were trained.

JS: So, you know, you have this really friendly, kind of Hawaiian atmosphere, and then it contrasts greatly with what you were talking about the segregation on the bus. I was wondering aside from that incident on the bus, were you folks, the local boys, affected by this? Not being White, and not being Black?

RC: Oh, the rule is if you ain't Black you White.

JS: But there wasn't any---you know some of the boys might have been really tan.

RC: Well, (one fellow in Shreveport asked) me if my father was running a restaurant down in Shreveport or something. I say, "No." I say, "I'm from Hawai'i."

JS: So you folks didn't really run into too many problems?

RC: Well, I sat with a Black woman as far from Kansas City down to Fort Worth, Texas. And she was really nice, intelligent lady. I didn't have any problems. Island people [from Hawai'i] don't go out and look for trouble.

JS: But you didn't---not being Caucasian, you folks didn't run into problems?

RC: Well, since you brought that up, my friend Bob Ray Morgan, his father had a farm in Illinois. It's close to Mount Vernon, Illinois. He ask me (before the) Memorial Day weekend, "How would you like to go home with me? You don't have to worry about food or shelter or anything. I take you (to my hometown)." He said, "All you have to do is pay for the gas and oil."

I said, "Okay, fine."

Most of the people going school don't have that much money. (Morgan) was (a) really nice guy and in fact he was renting one-half of this apartment and I was renting the other half with my friend (Dai Wun) Lam. (For) the first time, I went over the Mississippi River. We went through Saint Louis. Well, first we had to take [turns] driving, too. The first guy that drove, drove from Kansas City to Columbia, Missouri. Then I (was) the second one. I (drove) from Columbia, Missouri to Saint Louis—(123 miles). And I (asked Morgan), "How fast can I drive this car?"

He (told) me, "As fast as you can handle the car."

He was driving eighty-five miles an hour so I did the same. We came to one (area with a big sign), "Road under construction, slow down to sixty-five miles an hour." After we pass the construction area, sign (read), "Resume speed." I didn't want to drive across the Mississippi River because I didn't know the roads over there, so my friend (who lived in Saint Louis) drove across. We had to take (a person) sixty miles (to his) home, then (we returned to Mount Vernon) pretty close to midnight.

(Another person) that was riding with us was (Marion) Campbell, and somehow his wife saw me. And she (said), "How come Bob brought a foreigner home?"

(Morgan and Campbell were arguing, then Morgan told Campbell's wife), "That guy served in the military just as we did." And those guys, they serve in Germany during the war. In fact, one guy, Morgan, got gassed (with) mustard gas.

(The night we left Mount Vernon), Campbell wanted me to go drive with him. But I said no, (I was Morgan's guest and I would go back to Kansas City with him.) (Campbell) had to drive all the way back to Kansas City (alone), and that's about almost 400 miles.

(We spent the night at the home of his [Morgan's] wife's parents.) The next day we went over to his father's farm. That's where I rode a horse. (We) rode around the farm. It was a large farm, many acres. And each one of the sons would build a home away from each other, but they had different spots on the farm. (Their) running water (was an) underground river. (I) look in the well, (I) can see the water just running. (I helped) milk (a) cow—they were making butter there. Really different, something (I) never experienced before, because all the (dairy products we buy) from the supermarket. Then the next day we went over to one of his brother's house. (He) has a big chicken farm. And (Morgan took) two cases of eggs back to Kansas City, sell to his friends.

JS: And then so after you were in Kansas City, then, did you decide to return to Hawai'i right away?

RC: Well, after the New Year's, when I went back to Kansas City on the overnight train—when I got back to Kansas City, I got a letter from my mom saying that jobs are plentiful (because of the Korean War). When I graduated from the plumbing class, I was given the opportunity to take the (plumbing license test). (The school picked) the top eight students in the class. And we (went) to city hall (to) take (the) exam which consists of 100 questions on plumbing. Then a drawing (test) that's roughing-in a three-story building with a basement, (drawing in the sewer piping to all the fixtures). And the third was a lead-wiping test.

I passed, and (the plumbing board was) surprised that I drew so well in that drawing test. (A master plumber asked) me, "How (did you learn to) draw like that?" (I made an isometric drawing—three dimensional—of the sewage lines.) (The master plumber) said, "First time [I] seen (anyone draw) like that."

I (told them), "Well, you know, I was sheet metal worker before, and (I have done many isometric drawings of various types of objects)."

But anyway, when I got my plumbing license (in Kansas City), the master plumber from the school, he picked five of us to work with him. And he had a (six-month) remodel job for a hotel. He had 450 veteran housing coming up. We were just ready to go and all of a sudden the (plumbing parts, piping, fixtures, etc., were hard to get because of) the Korean War. I told them, "If you guys can't get started, I (am going back) home. I (will seek) more meaningful employment."

(I left Kansas City, and the planes were loaded.) (Many) people were traveling cross-country to see their loved ones before they (went) overseas. I ended up in Hollywood. (The plane landed in Los Angeles and) I went to Roosevelt Hotel, then caught a taxi to go to see my brother in Hollywood. We went up to Canoga Park (and stayed at his friend's home). (After returning home, I applied for a job and I was sent to the shipyard for an interview.) I met with the chief quartermaster who still remembered me. They hired me.

JS: And this is at Pearl Harbor?

RC: (Yes.) I continued to work there until January 1982. That's when I retired.

JS: So you went back in 1951, right?

RC: Right.

JS: And you went back to the Shop 17 and continued sheet metal shop work there?

RC: (Yes.)

JS: So how was your job, this second time, how was that compared with the first time you were there?

RC: The first time I went over there (it was an) apprenticeship. The next time I went as journeyman, you do work on your own. About a year and four months later, they were looking for people to do layout work or pattern development. And they tried all kind of people, so finally, I told my boss give me a break. And my boss said, "No, they want this other guy."

I said, "I'll show you what I can do."

Boss said, "(The quartermaster said no)."

(After trying out all the potential layout men with no success, I finally got an opportunity to try out for the job. The foreman was impressed with my performance, both in knowledge and

speed.) (The foreman kept me in his section), and I've been working there for that particular type of work for (over) twenty years. (The shop sent me to the ventilation section of the design division to draw up plans for vent systems on various types of ships.) Of course, this is right down my alley, because I had a lot of mechanical drawing. I've done a lot of things in my days. But looks like every time we run into a new field, I was selected. When (we) first got into plastics—you've seen the guys make surfboard, they use(d) the resin and then they put that fiberglass cloth on 'em and they build up layers. But we were making submarine venturis. Well, I had to experiment with the stuff first to see how that thing would react. Well, I had to read up all the data and let the other (workers) know about it, design all the moulds (and) jigs. We made one that (had) a crank. When we had this venturi on top there, you can just crank it and turn it to different positions.

Then they brought in a numerical control machine—(punch and notching machine from Boston naval shipyard). And they told me I (would be the) programmer. I had to go down to the library and learn about digital (numerical systems). And I had to go down the machine shop (because) they already had numerical control machines. So I had to figure out how they cut their tapes—you know, the different command positions, (punch positions, etc.). I studied a lot on my own. Then later on I had more data from the other shipyards. I analyzed what they did, then later (the) representatives from Warner and Swasey who built this numerical control machine (explained how to program and operate the numerically controlled punch and notching machine). (I experimented with the numerical control machine to save cycle time and see what types of jobs we can save money by using the machine.) Then after I got that program started, (I was promoted to) foreman [in 1972].

JS: Okay, I think we have to stop here today 'cause we're out of time.

RC: Okay, so anyway, I continue being a foreman and the guy that took my place, (I) showed him what to do. I continue(d) working there until I retired (on January 8, 1982).

JS: Okay, well, thank you for this.

RC: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW

# **AN ERA OF CHANGE**

## ***Oral Histories of Civilians in World War II Hawai'i***

### **Volume I**

**Center for Oral History  
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